

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION
OF THE MALDEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Monday, March 6, 2023

Herbert L. Jackson Council Chamber Room #106 - 215 Pleasant Street
And Virtual Meeting

Mayor Christenson called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. Mayor Christenson read the docket items for the meeting.

Mayor Christenson led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence for those who have served our country and for those who continue to do so.

Roll Call

The following attendance was taken:

Mayor Christenson	Present
Mr. Drummey	Present
Mr. McCarthy	Present
Ms. Spadafora	Present
Ms. Macklin	Present
Mr. Weldai	Present
Mr. Gray	Present
Mr. Bernard	Present
Ms. Rose-Zeiberg	Present
Superintendent Noriega-Murphy	Present
Student Representative Hakkaoui	Present
Clerk	Present

Mayor Christenson invited Mr. Weldai to provide details about joining the language access channels for the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Christenson brought forth the matter of the approval of minutes for the February 6th, 2023 Regular Session of the School Committee. Mr. Drummey made the motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Spadafora seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Bonnie Littlejohn, 127 Emerald Street, Malden

Ms. Littlejohn read a statement from Ms. Dawn O’Toole, 130 Adams Street, Malden. Ms. O’Toole highlighted a slide from the Superintendent’s February Report for the School Committee titled, “Every school, every classroom, every day.” Ms. O’Toole said that the Accelerated and Enriched Academic Program (AEAP) creates exclusionary classrooms because many students in Malden are being excluded due to the location alone. Ms. O’Toole continued that a middle school honors program will be available at all schools and believes that more programs districtwide are needed.

Ms. Carrie Kourkoumelis, 28 Cargill Street, Melrose

Ms. Kourkouvelis said that her 4 children were part of the AEAP program when the program was first established. Ms. Kourkouvelis said that this program meets the needs of students who require this program. She added that it is a myth that academically advanced students will thrive in any classroom. Ms. Kourkouvelis urged the School Committee to support the program.

Ms. Amy Friedman, 8 Marvin Street, Malden

Ms. Friedman said that Assistant Superintendent of Student Services, Ms. Pam Macdonald's contract should be extended for another three years as their interaction with her has been exemplary. Ms. Friedman added that continuity is important.

Sophia Zdravchev, 6th Grade AEAP student at Linden STEAM Academy

Sofia transferred to Linden from the Ferryway School to participate in the AEAP program. Sofia requested the program be continued.

Anna Wutkiewicz, 6th Grade AEAP student at Linden STEAM Academy

Anna had been in the AEAP program since 2nd grade and is now in 6th grade. Anna explained why advanced learning is important.

Superintendent's Report

1. District Updates and Highlights

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy introduced Mr. Peter Rowley, Linden educator and Erin Grondin, 9th Grade MHS student, former Linden student, to present an update on the Sleep Awareness project that was initiated last year. Mr. Rowley said this was a civics action project started last year by the 8th grade students at Linden STEAM Academy. Erin provided details about the Sleep Awareness survey. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy added that students will be given a link to take the survey and the Sleep Awareness Week will be observed in June.

In response to Ms. Spadafora, Mr. Rowley said students from Grades 6-12 across the district will be given the survey. Mr. Bernard commended the effort and provided his support. In response to Mr. Gray, Mr. Rowley said the data gathered by the survey will be shared.

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the district's K-4 report card has not been revised for the last 20 years. A few educators and administrators came together to form the Report Card Working Group to review this matter. The members are Ms. Suzanne Millett, Integrated Kindergarten Educator at Forestdale; Ms. Kathleen Smith, 1st Grade Educator at Beebe; Ms. Tiffany Pi and Ms. Amanda Spayne, 2nd Grade Educators at Beebe; Ms. Christina Cunningham, 3rd Grade Educator at Beebe; Ms. Caitlin Rodensky, 4th Grade Educator at Beebe; Ms. Victoria Mulkern, Director of Literacy and Title; Ms. Cara Hovhanessian, Director of STEM K-5; Ms. Kate Greco, Assistant Principal K-4 at Beebe; and Dr. Kari-ann Murphy, Principal at Beebe. Members of the Working Group spoke about why the K-4 report card needed to be revised, the process, timeline and the format established for the new report card. The new report card will be rolled out in Fall 2023.

In response to Ms. Spadafora, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the district is working with Aspen to translate everything based on the home language, for at least seven languages as of right now, the only language available is English.

Ms. Spadafora asked whether the report card can be tailored for students with special needs because they might have challenges with some of the areas that are assessed. Ms. Millett responded that this was discussed during the working group meeting and they were going to add more personalized comments for different students in the comments section. Ms. Pi added that educators will have an info session so that they can individualize the report cards to the particular student and their goals. Ms. Hovhanessian added that the grades will take into account students meeting their own individualized goals.

In response to Mr. Weldai, Ms. Pi said that the report card will take into account overall goals as well as individualized goals. In response to another question from Mr. Weldai, Ms. Pi said the survey to staff and parents were sent to all the schools in the district. In response to Mayor Christenson, Ms. Pi and Ms. Hovhanessian said that the topic about revising the K-4 report card came up in different meetings and that is why a coordinated effort was started.

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy provided updates on Stop The Stigma Day as well as other activities in the schools.

2. Accelerated and Enriched Academic Program (AEAP) Update

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy commended the over 1,000 students from across the district who made the honor roll.

Dr. Doug Dias, STEM Director for Grades 6-12 provided details about the Honors Pathway for students in grades 6-8 who are able to take on more challenging work along with community service. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy emphasized that that this Honor Pathways is not replacing any program but that this is the signature of the district because it will be available to all students.

Ms. Mulkern, Ms. Hovhanessian and Dr. Dias provided clarifications about curriculum, instruction and extensions in the district. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that curriculum is important as it provides a road map and allows for the identification of gaps. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy spoke about the efforts undertaken for promoting the current AEAP program. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said she stands by her recommendation and believes that differentiation in the classroom can be achieved with a rigorous curriculum, high quality materials, professional development for the teachers and individualized plans for students if needed.

In response to Mr. Gray, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said the primary goal for all students is to master grade level standards and that individual plans with more opportunities would be created for students who have mastered the standards. Ms. Mulkern and Ms. Hovhanessian explained that there are many components in the curriculum that provide for deeper learning for students who have mastered the standards.

In response to Ms. Spadafora, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the honors pathways in the middle school will provide a trajectory for students who can go to 9th grade honors classes and then Advanced Placement courses in 10th grade. In response to another question from Ms. Spadafora, Ms. Hovhanessian and Ms. Mulkern said that the new curriculum provides

opportunities to revisit lessons for students who couldn't grasp it the first time or at the previous grade level.

In response to Mr. Bernard, Ms. Mulkern and Dr. Dias said that the literacy and math coaches are in every school and they help teachers with the curriculum. In response to another question from Mr. Bernard, Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is still working on the definitions for advanced learning as they do not have a program. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy added that the terms being used in the district will be added into the Program of Studies.

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg said that DESE has put out some ideas on their website for advanced learning. In response to Ms. Rose-Zeiberg, Dr. Dias said the determination of whether the student has met or achieved above grade level is not just gauged with the first quarter results because there might be other circumstances involved. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg expressed interest in visiting the programs at the schools.

In response to Student Representative Hakkaoui, Dr. Dias said all options for community service was considered and there will be a documented form with all the particulars for the volunteer work. Opportunities will be provided in school and any volunteer work outside of school will also be considered. In response to another question, Dr. Dias said that the students will be given a mix of tasks for their curriculum work and appropriate time to complete it. The teachers who have volunteered for the pilot program come from all the schools.

Mr. Gray said that the School Committee members can do more to promote the programs at the schools. In response to a question from Mr. Gray, Dr. Dias said the recommendation for the honors pathways came from educators. Ms. Spadafora clarified that there were two programs presented which was the Middle School Honors Pathway for Grades 6-8 and the curriculum and instruction for students performing at a higher level.

Mayor Christenson said curriculum belongs with the Superintendent, administrators and educators, as it is not part of the role of the School Committee. In response to Mayor Christenson's question, Dr. Dias said the students who spoke in support of the AEAP program will receive the same high quality education, learn together with their peers, have opportunities to learn beyond grade level and share what they have learned with other students. Mr. Weldai said that this pathway and curriculum will meet each student where they are and help them grow.

Superintendent Noriega-Murphy said that programming, curriculum and instruction is within the purview of the Superintendent. Superintendent Noriega-Murphy added that everything discussed and the suggestions provided will be reflected in the Program of Studies.

Subcommittee Reports

1. Policy and Procedures Subcommittee – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora said that the subcommittee met to review the policy on student transfer requests among the K-8 schools in the district. The subcommittee met on March 1st and voted

unanimously to approve the new policy which allows the Superintendent to make decisions on the transfer requests on a case-by-case basis for safety reasons and extenuating circumstances.

Motions and Resolutions

1. Accelerated Student Learning Resolution – Ms. Spadafora and Ms. Rose-Zeiberg

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg said that she believes a resolution is needed to get back on track. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg read the resolution. Ms. Spadafora supported the resolution, adding that students learn differently and there needs to be a pathway that will meet these different needs.

Mr. Gray said the AEAP program has been within the purview of the School Committee for at least the last five years. Mr. Gray added that in 2019, the School Committee voted unanimously to promote and expand the AEAP program. An ad-hoc committee was formed for this purpose. Mr. Gray continued that in 2020, everything was derailed due to the pandemic and the School Committee voted to suspend the program. Mr. Gray said that while the program might be within the purview of the Superintendent, the School Committee took control of it for at least the last five years.

Mr. Gray requested for more clarity on a statement in the resolution to reflect students who are performing significantly at a higher grade level than their peers. Ms. Rose-Zeiberg responded stating that the words “higher level” is already in the resolution. In response to Mr. Gray’s comment about the Program of Studies, Ms. Spadafora said that at a minimum, the Program of Studies will be reviewed once a year but if the Superintendent has more changes throughout the year, it will be reviewed as needed.

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg made a motion to adopt the resolution. Ms. Spadafora seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted YES

Mr. McCarthy voted YES

Ms. Spadafora voted YES

Ms. Macklin voted YES

Mr. Weldai voted YES

Mr. Gray voted NO

Mr. Bernard voted NO

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES

Mayor Christenson voted YES

Motion passed with 7 votes in favor and 2 against.

2. Safety/Extenuating Circumstances Transfer Policy – Ms. Spadafora

Ms. Spadafora read the proposed policy. Ms. Spadafora made a motion to adopt the Safety/Extenuating Circumstances Transfer Policy. Mr. Weldai seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Resolution in Support of an Act Relative to Universal School Meals – Mr. Bernard

Mr. Bernard provided some background information about the initiative and how it would be funded.

Mr. Bernard made a motion to adopt the resolution. Mr. Drummey seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

- 4. Revision of Malden Public Schools Calendar 2023-2024 for Pre-School Start Date – Mr. Weldai**
Mr. Weldai invited Superintendent Noriega-Murphy and Principal Lawrence to explain the proposed revision to the 2023-2024 school calendar. Principal Lawrence said that if PreK started on September 7th with the Kindergarteners instead of the other grades, it will allow for a more continuous schooling experience because not all PreK students are on a 5-day schedule. It will also allow time for the staff to do registration, gathering of materials, assessments, school tours and engaging families.

Mr. Weldai made a motion to adopt the revision to the calendar. Mr. Bernard seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

- 5. School Choice Vote – Mr. Weldai**

Mr. Weldai explained that every year, the School Committee needs to vote on this matter because if a vote is not taken, it would mean that the district will be a school choice district.

Mr. Weldai made a motion to vote NO on the school choice matter. Mr. Drummey seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted NO

Mr. McCarthy voted NO

Ms. Spadafora voted NO

Ms. Macklin voted NO

Mr. Weldai voted NO

Mr. Gray voted NO

Mr. Bernard voted NO

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted NO

Mayor Christenson voted NO

Motion passed unanimously.

Personal Privilege

Executive Session

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to enter into Executive Session at 8:40 p.m. Mr. Bernard seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted YES

Mr. McCarthy voted YES

Ms. Spadafora voted YES

Ms. Macklin voted YES

Mr. Weldai voted YES

Mr. Gray voted YES

Mr. Bernard voted YES

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES

Mayor Christenson voted YES

Motion passed unanimously.

The committee reconvened to the Regular Session at 9:05 p.m.

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to approve the salary adjustment for Ms. Janell Summers, Assistant Business Manager/Financial Analyst to \$105,000 effective February 6, 2023. Mr. Drummey seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Mr. Drummey voted YES

Mr. McCarthy voted YES

Ms. Spadafora voted YES

Ms. Macklin voted YES

Mr. Weldai voted YES

Mr. Gray voted YES

Mr. Bernard voted YES

Ms. Rose-Zeiberg voted YES

Mayor Christenson voted YES

Motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Ms. Spadafora made a motion to adjourn at 9:07 p.m. Mr. Drummey seconded and it was so VOTED.

Motion passed unanimously.

I certify that a notice of this meeting was filed with the Clerk of the City of Malden in the manner provided under Chapter 39, Section 23A of the General Laws.



Shirley Dorai, Clerk